

A brief introduction to

# **Participatory Evaluation**

A handbook for practitioners

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**Title** : A brief introduction to Participatory  
Evaluation

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Dear friends,

I do not believe in having a perfect manual that can support for participatory exercises. Participatory evaluation process must be flexible and appropriate to the local context. However, a reference guideline can be used as and when necessary. Practical experiences can make one effective to facilitate participatory evaluation process.

I, therefore, expect this handout can be helpful and should be used as a reference guideline only.

Thank you.

Kamal Phuyal  
October 2012





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## 1. What is participatory evaluation?

In recent years, participatory evaluation concept has been attracting growing attention among the development professionals both in government and non-governmental sectors. However, a single definition cannot represent the wider meaning of participatory evaluation.

Participatory evaluation emphasizes the importance of the people's participation in the development process and raises their ownership feeling. It involves various stakeholders and partners<sup>1</sup> in the collective examination and assessment of those programmes or projects they are involved in. As R. Thompson writes (Participatory development documents, 1995) participatory evaluation is based on the assertion that evaluation goes beyond science, getting the facts, to include the human, political, social, cultural, and contextual elements. It is people centred: organization and local people are the key actors of the evaluation process and not the mere objects of the evaluation.

Participatory evaluation facilitates local people to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. It is also an educational process in which participants increase awareness and understanding of the various factors, which affect them, thereby increasing their control over the development process.

Various stakeholders with active participation of the local people carry out participatory evaluation jointly. Evaluation is also like to see where and how fast the programme is going, and then estimating when it is likely to reach its destination. Participatory evaluation, however, focuses to let the local people to express their perceptions in order to monitor progress and effectiveness, consider costs and efficiency, show where changes were needed, and help to plan more effectively for the future.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Many people refer the term beneficiaries, but, I prefer to use the term partners.

<sup>2</sup> M. T. Feuerstein, 1993, Partners in Evaluation.

Some descriptions about participatory evaluation are as following.

Deepa Narayan, 1996

Participatory evaluation is a process of collaborative problem-solving through the generation and use of knowledge. It is a process that leads to corrective action by involving all levels of users in shared decision making.

Hope, A., Timmel, A., 1996, Training for Transformation Part III

Participatory evaluation is a process of involving participants in programmes to reflect critically on their own projects, programmes, aims and leadership. It is participant-centred. It is an important part of the development education process. Its value is that it continues the process of action-reflection, and increases the awareness that people themselves can shape their own lives and destiny.

Carole C. Upshur, 1995

Participatory evaluation (PE) is a method of inquiry in the family of participatory and action research. These traditions in research and evaluation grew out of conflicts and contradictions about how knowledge is created and used.

USAID, 1996, Participatory evaluation and international cooperation, June 2001

Participatory evaluation provides the opportunities of the active involvement in the evaluation process for those with a stake in the programme; providers, partners, customers (beneficiaries) and any other interested parties. Participation typically takes place in all phases of the evaluation: planning and designing of the evaluation; gathering and analysing the relevant data; identifying the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendation;

disseminating results; and preparing an action plan to improve programme performance.

#### OESP handbook, 1997

Participatory evaluation, a dimension of participatory development embodying many of the same concepts, involves the stakeholders and beneficiaries of a programme or project in the collective examination and assessment of that programme or project. It is people centred: project stakeholders and beneficiaries are the key actors of the evaluation process and not the mere objects of the evaluation.

#### UNDP, 1997

Participatory evaluation is people centred: project stakeholders and beneficiaries are the key actors of the evaluation process and not the mere target of the evaluation.

#### Innovative Network, Inc., 2003

Participatory evaluation is the process of engaging stakeholders in an evaluation effort. (Typical stakeholders - the people most invested in the success of a program - include staff, board members, volunteers, sister agencies, and funder.) Getting input from your stakeholders at all stages of your evaluation effort - from deciding what questions to ask, to collecting data, to analyzing data and presenting results - is critical to the usefulness and ultimate value of the evaluation. A participatory approach to evaluation gets the "buy-in" of as many stakeholders as possible, so they have a feeling of ownership over evaluation results. This helps to create an atmosphere where people want to learn about how and why programs are achieving results.

#### World Bank, 2000

Participatory evaluation is a joint task process where stakeholders of various levels jointly evaluate the project and implement the

necessary revision measures. In this collaborative resolution of problems, men and women of communities, NGOs and other mediating organizations, private corporations involved in the project, and government employees of all levels are invited to participate.

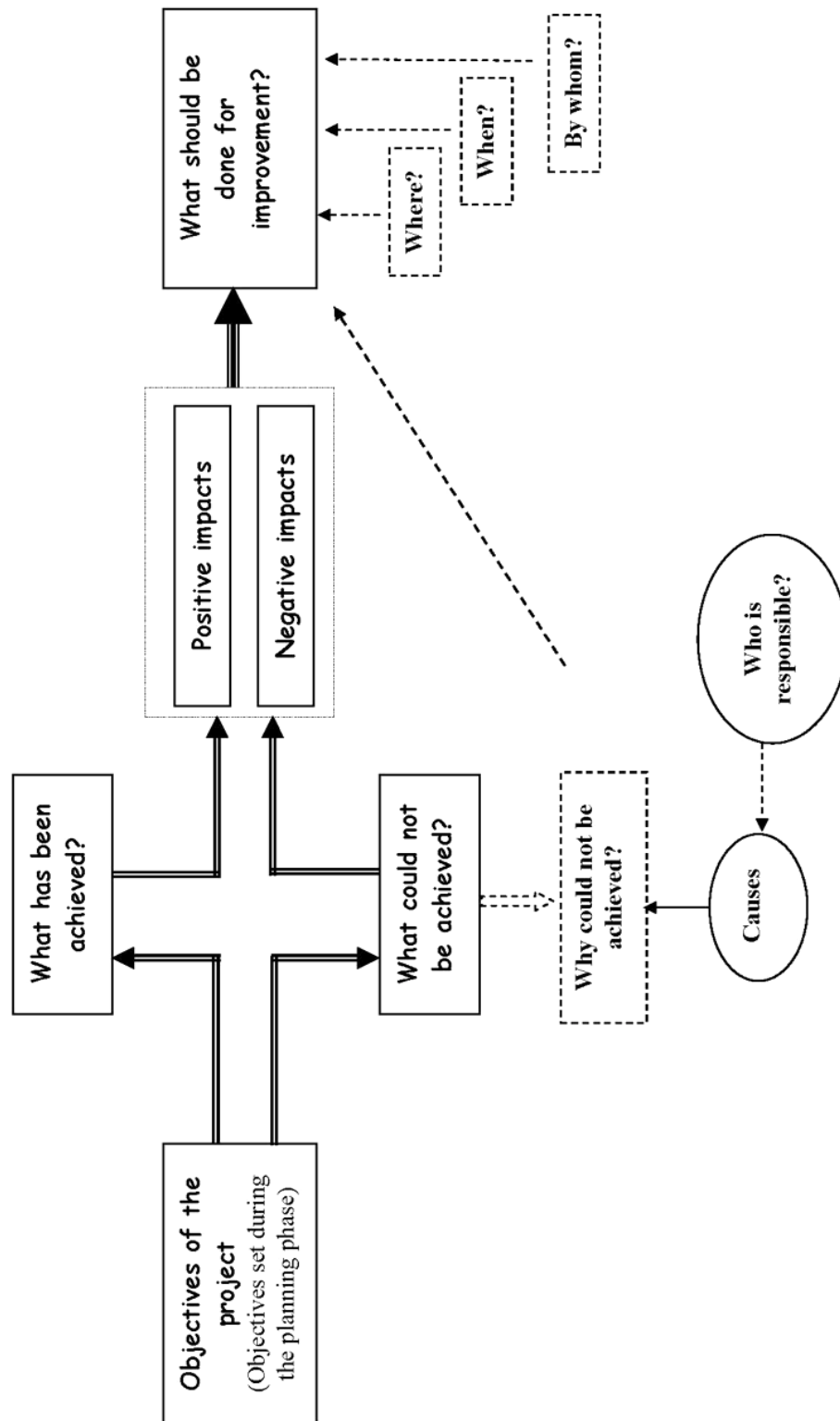
#### Evaluation guidelines, 1999, Danida

An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of on-going or completed aid activities, their design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

## 2. Participatory evaluation and conventional evaluation: some differences

| <b>Evaluation through conventional survey</b>                         | <b>Participatory evaluation</b>                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Emphasis on quantity                                                  | Emphasis on quality                                                                                      |
| Based on multi-topic survey with help of questionnaire                | Based on group interactions through participatory methods in different locations                         |
| Whose reality? Outsiders play the role of experts.                    | People's reality with people as analyst.<br>Explain complex things in their way and with their emphasis. |
| Community as beneficiaries                                            | Community as partners                                                                                    |
| Handout mentality                                                     | Community capacity enhancement                                                                           |
| Closed-ended inquiry<br>Questionnaires fielded by field investigators | Open-ended inquiry<br>Field based participatory exercises                                                |
| Top-down process<br>All questions cannot be anticipated               | Bottom-up process                                                                                        |
| Poor people less involved in the process                              | Poor people identified and their active participation                                                    |
| 'We change community' - attitude among the outsiders                  | We facilitate so communities will change themselves – attitude                                           |
| Looking for 'average' picture and solutions                           | Looking for diversity differential pictures and solutions                                                |
| Emphasizes quantitative aspects                                       | Has both qualitative and quantitative aspects                                                            |
| Individual as unit with little scope for group work                   | Group analysis and group presentation                                                                    |
| Tends to overlook gender aspects                                      | Gender aspect is important                                                                               |

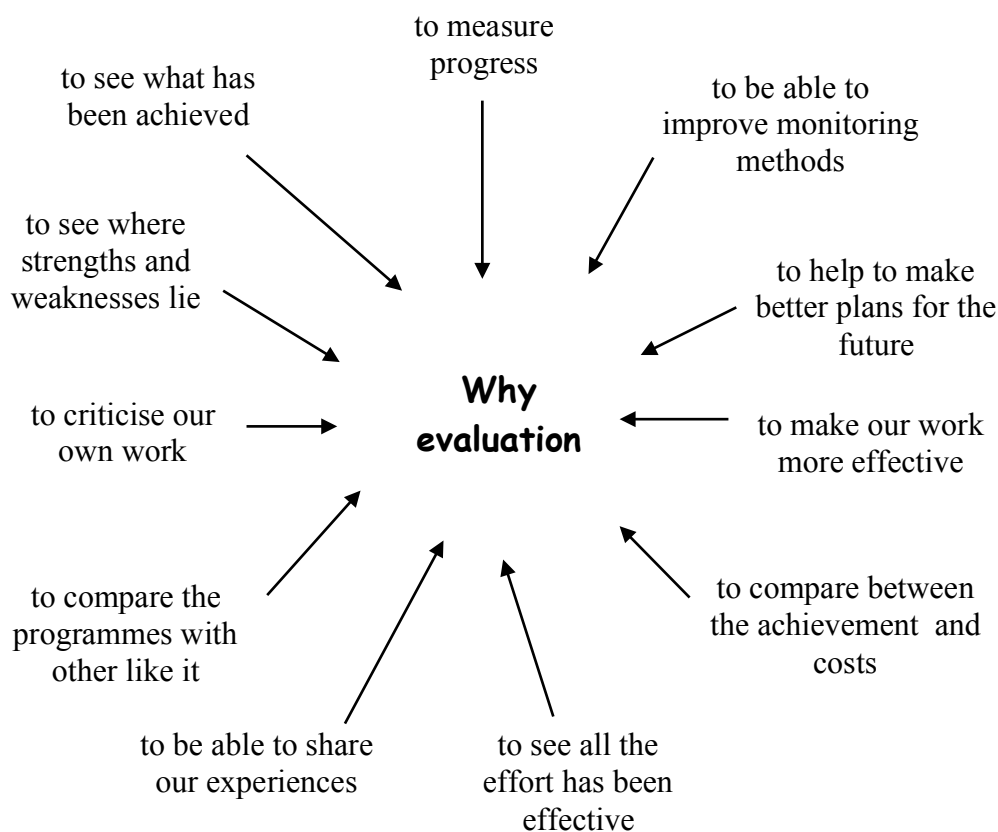
### 3. Why participatory evaluation (A framework to understand the objectives of participatory evaluation)





#### 4. Why participatory evaluation is done

Participatory evaluation is done not just for the sake of doing evaluation. Instead, it should focus more on the learning process. Its outcomes are not mere a descriptions of the project and its situation. Rather the evaluation process represents meaningful constructions of actors' attempts to understand the situations in which they act. The evaluation facilitators therefore assist the local people to construct a shared reality about the project and to make collective judgements about the project accomplished and problems faced.

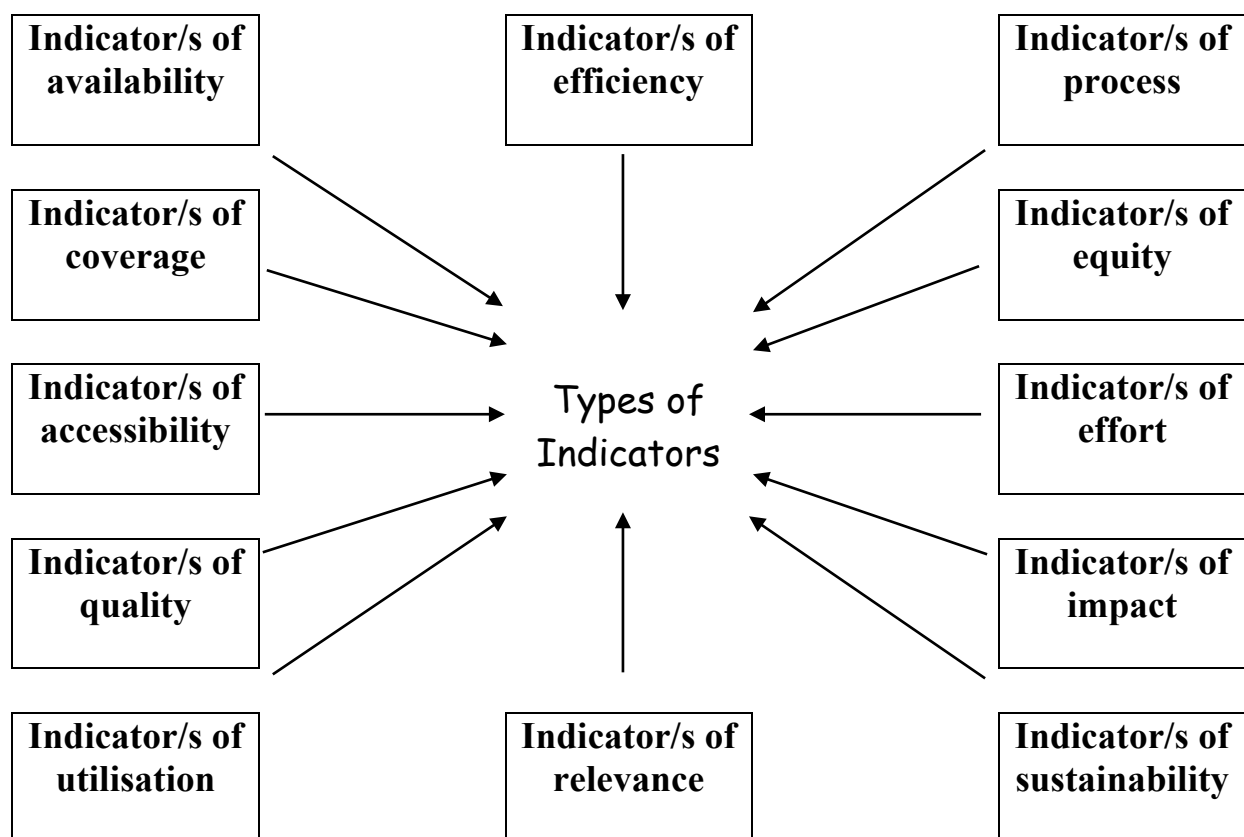


'Primary stakeholders' participation is essential in assessing and determining how to improve and promote sustainable development. Only participatory evaluation can ensure various stakeholders work actively together' (Okley, 1996) in determining and controlling what is to be evaluated, the evaluation indicators to be used, the instruments for measuring the chosen indicators

and the means of analysing interpreting, communicating and utilising the findings (O. Okuga, 2002).

## 5. Types of indicators

What is the basis of evaluation or what to evaluate has been very crucial question in participatory evaluation. Indicators should be set in the beginning of the evaluation process. However, local people, the primary stakeholders, should participate in deciding indicators. The possible indicators can be described as follows:



### Indicator/s of availability

- It shows whether something exists or available in the community or not.

#### Indicator/s of efficiency

- It shows whether resources and activities are being put to the best possible use to achieve the objectives, such as the number, frequency and quality.

#### Indicator/s of process

- It shows whether the planning and implementation is done properly or not. Who designed the project and how the project was implemented is analysed.

#### Indicator/s of coverage

- It shows what proportions of those who need something are receiving it. The number of people (or percentage) actually receiving the programmes benefit is analysed.

#### Indicator/s of accessibility

- It shows whether what exists is actually within reach of those who need it or not.

#### Indicator/s of quality

- It shows the quality or standard of the programmes.

#### Indicator/s of utilisation

- It shows to what extent programme that has been made available is being used for that purpose.

#### Indicator/s of relevance

- It shows how relevant or appropriate the programme is. Whether the programme done fits into local context is also analysed.

#### Indicator/s of impact

- It shows if what we are doing is really making any difference or not. What change occurred in the community is also analysed.

#### Indicator/s of effort

- It shows how much and what is being invested in order to achieve the objectives.

#### Indicator/s of equity

- It shows whether the distribution of programmes was equitable or not. If there was any discrimination during the resource distribution or not is also analysed.

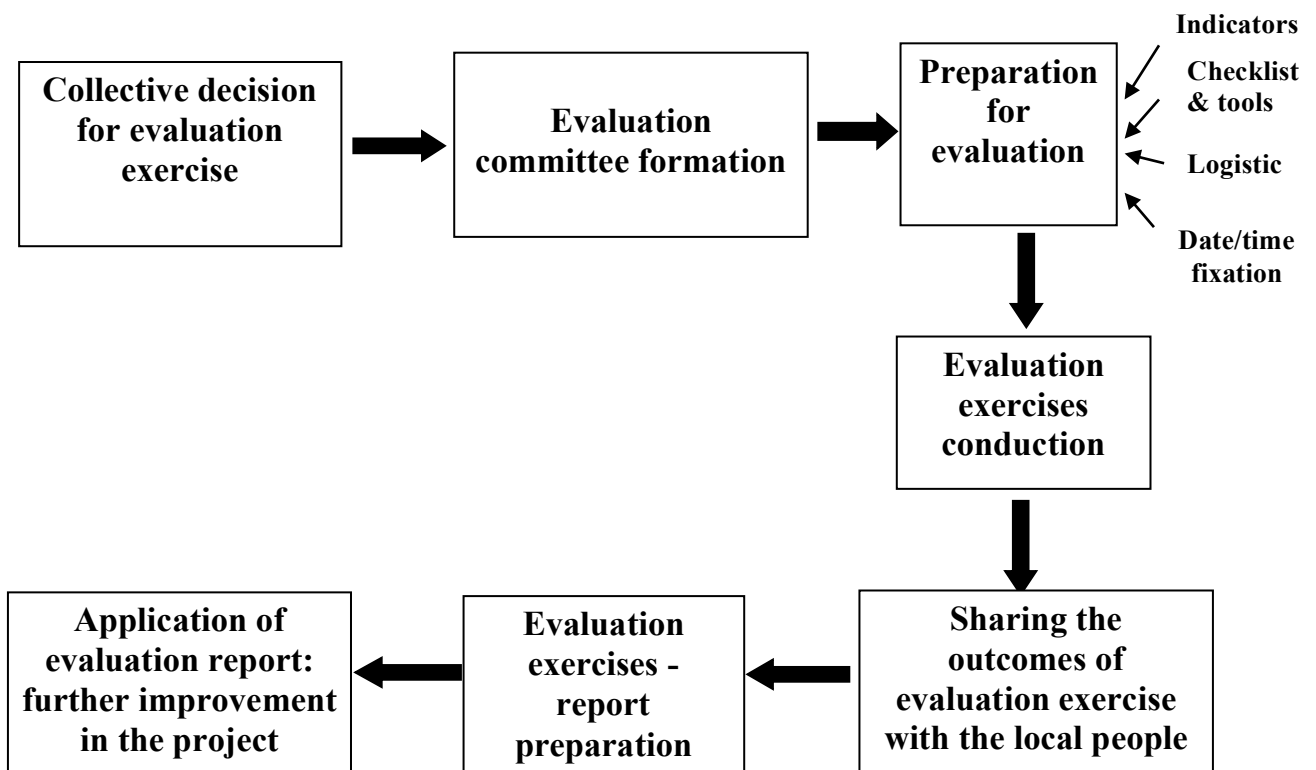
#### Indicator/s of sustainability

- It shows the strategy planned by the beneficiaries to continue the programmes in the future too. Capacity developed in the community is also analysed.

Indicators should be finalised having discussions with various stakeholders, preferably with the local people before conducting evaluation exercises. Outsider facilitators and technical experts can help the local people to decide appropriate indicators for evaluation.

## 6. Stages of participatory evaluation

### Participatory evaluation process



Note: This is a proposed evaluation process. Process can be followed in various ways, however, it should be people-centred, and should prefer to actively engage marginalised people.

## Evaluation process:

|                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Collective decision for evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implementing organization and local people should sit together, discuss and make decision for conducting evaluation.</li><li>• Local people's decision is most important for this.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Evaluation committee formation     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluation committee is to be formed in order to coordinate/lead evaluation work.</li><li>• Local people should lead the committee.</li><li>• Representatives of implementing and other partners should stay in the committee.</li><li>• Local people need technical support for evaluation that can be provided by these representatives.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                   |
| Preparation for evaluation         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A team can be formed to conduct evaluation exercises.</li><li>• Local youth can be involved in the team.</li><li>• Orientation on the concept of participatory evaluation to be done for team members.</li><li>• Training on using participatory tools should be given the team members.</li><li>• Other necessary preparation to be done: setting dates, times and venues with local people for evaluation exercises.</li><li>• Logistic preparation: arranging papers and other materials.</li></ul> |
| Evaluation exercises               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meet the people and share objectives.</li><li>• Conduct evaluation exercises using various participatory tools and techniques.</li><li>• Do analysis and draw results/learning.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Sharing outcomes of evaluation     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Share the results of evaluation.</li><li>• Listen to people how they react on the outcomes.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Evaluation report preparation      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prepare a report of evaluation. Prepare first in local language and provide reports to the local people.</li><li>• Provide reports to all the stakeholders.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Use of report                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Put efforts to the project for further improvement as per the suggestions made by the evaluation results.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

## 7. Indicators to be used and checklist required

Evaluation facilitators should develop a checklist, in coordination with local people and other stakeholders, of each indicator that can be used using various participatory tools. Some examples of the checklist have been shown below:

| <b>Indicators to be used</b> | <b>Checklist required</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Coverage                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How many families have been covered by the project?</li><li>• What area has been covered by the project?</li></ul>                                                                                                                 |
| Accessibility                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the process to participate the project?</li><li>• Who have been able to join (and who are not) the project?</li><li>• What efforts made to generate the accessibility of the marginalised people to the project?</li></ul> |
| Process                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How the process of the project was: designing to implementation level?</li><li>• How local people participated in each stage?</li><li>• What difficulties were faced – in which stages?</li></ul>                                  |
| Utilisation                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whether the learnt skills/knowledge have been utilised or not? If yes, by whom and how?</li></ul>                                                                                                                                  |
| Equity                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which people (from which well-being category) have participated in the project?</li><li>• What about the participation of the weaker voices?</li><li>• Who participate in the training (male or female)?</li></ul>                 |

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Quality        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is the quality of produced fishes? According to price received and according to the taste you have tested.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                              |
| Impact         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What skills and knowledge have been gained? And how?</li> <li>• What Changes the project has brought?</li> <li>• What are the positive effects?</li> <li>• Is there any negative effects produced?</li> <li>• How the income has been used?</li> </ul> |
| Sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many members so far have been trained and on what?</li> <li>• What are the things (skills/knowledge/others) necessary for the effective continuation of the project?</li> </ul>                                                                    |

**Note:** Other necessary checklist will be added during the preparation of the workshop.



## **8. Tools to be used**

Various tools can be used for carrying out participatory evaluation. Facilitators can/should modify the application process of tools when necessary. Moreover, new tools can be generated. Here are some tools, which can be used during the participatory evaluation.

### **1. Mapping tools**

- a. Social and Resource mapping
- b. Mobility mapping
- c. Transect map/walk

### **2. Diagramming tools**

- a. Time line
- b. Seasonal calendar
- c. Trend diagram
- d. Flow diagram
- e. Daily routine diagram
- f. Impact diagram

### **3. Ranking tools**

- a. Pair-wise ranking
- b. Direct matrix ranking
- c. Well-being ranking

### **4. Discussion and interview tools**

- a. Focus group discussions
- b. Semi-structured interview

### **5. Other tools**

- a. Pictures
- b. Spider-web diagram

### 9. Indicators - checklist - information to be collected and tools to be used

An example of the use of tools and for collecting information to evaluate the project with different indicators has been shown below. This is just an example. The detailed list of information and tools to be used should be decided after finalising the indicators with local people.

| Indicators    | Checklist                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Tools                                                 |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Coverage      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many families have been covered by the project?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of households</li> <li>Population (male and female)</li> <li>Fish farmers</li> <li>Fish farmers involved in people's organisation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Social map<br>Transect walk                           |
| Accessibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the process to participate the project?</li> <li>Who can join the project?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation (in PO) procedure</li> <li>Participation (joining to the project) procedure</li> <li>Criterion for joining PO and the project</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                  | FGD                                                   |
| Process       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What difficulties were faced – in which stages?</li> <li>How the decisions for fish farming were made?</li> <li>How is the decision making process?</li> <li>How fishes are grown?</li> <li>How fishes reach in the market?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List of problems/challenges faced</li> <li>Experiences on how challenges were faced</li> <li>Success stories and failure experiences</li> <li>New ideas for dealing with challenges</li> <li>Fish growing process: tasks to be done in different stages</li> <li>Fish: farm to market – process and roles of different people in the process</li> </ul> | FGD<br>SSI<br>Case study<br>Flow diagram<br>Time line |
| Utilisation   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether the learnt skills/knowledge have been utilised or not? If yes, by whom and how?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing indigenous knowledge</li> <li>Number of trained persons (male and female)</li> <li>Gained knowledge and skills</li> <li>Utilisation of knowledge and skills</li> <li>Types of fishes preferred by the villagers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                     | FGD<br>Pair-wise ranking                              |

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                         |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Quality        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is the quality of produced fishes? According to price received? And according to the taste you have tested?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Types of fishes produced: before the project started and now</li> <li>Quality of fish produced</li> <li>Price of fish: season-wise</li> <li>Taste of fish: type-wise</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Transect walk<br>Matrix ranking                                                         |
| Impact         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What skills and knowledge have been gained? And how?</li> <li>What effects the project had made?</li> <li>What are the positive effects?</li> <li>Is there any negative effects have been made?</li> <li>How the income has been used?</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learnt knowledge</li> <li>Learnt skills</li> <li>Change after the project</li> <li>Socio-economic condition: before and after the project</li> <li>Fish consumption: before and after the project</li> <li>Food consumption in a day and season-wise</li> <li>Daily work load: before and after the project</li> <li>Mobility of the villagers: before and after the project</li> <li>Good things of the village</li> </ul> | Impact diagram<br>Daily fooding diagram<br>Daily routine diagram<br>Mobility map<br>FGD |
| Sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many members so far have been trained and on what?</li> <li>What are the things (skills/knowledge/others) necessary for the effective continuation of the project?</li> <li>What institutions and organisations are existing in the community?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market mobility</li> <li>Knowledge and skills gained and their level of confidence</li> <li>Farmers' view for the sustainability of the project</li> <li>Name of institutions existing in the village</li> <li>Institutions and organisations' role in the village</li> <li>Their roles for the sustainability of the project</li> <li>Opportunities existing in the village</li> </ul>                                     | Mobility map<br>FGD<br>SSI<br>Institutional diagram                                     |

## **10. Potential challenges to be faced and suggestions for solution**

An absolute list of potential challenges cannot be finalised, which differs from one area to other, one context to other and also differs according to the time. Evaluation facilitators, therefore, should work out to be aware of challenges to be faced before conducting evaluation exercises. The following points give some ideas about the potential challenges (or risks) to the evaluation facilitators.

Potential challenges to be faced:

### **a. Discrimination/marginalized situation:**

- Women's low participation in front of men.
- Children's low participation in front of adult.
- Poor hesitate to speak out.
- Illiterates feel difficult to express their feeling in front of educated people.

### **b. Communication gap:**

- Language and other gaps (like level of awareness and way of thinking) might create difficulties for the local people to understand outsiders.
- Outsiders are from different socio-cultural context, which might create gaps.
- Biasness of the outsiders: seasonal, educational, and other biasness.

### **c. Sensitive environment:**

- Discussions on sensitive (i.e. poverty, power, politics, etc.) issues might create some conflicting situation.
- Exercises in public place might generate conflicting environment.
- If the facilitators are not gender sensitive, conflict might be raised that affects the whole evaluation works.

d. Lack of skills and experiences:

- Lack of experiences and skills among the facilitators might affect the evaluation exercises.

e. Time factors:

- Most 'participatory exercises' are conducted as per the convenient time of the organisations' staff members. In this situation, marginalized people (mainly, women, children and poor) might not be able to participate in the exercises as they are busy mainly during the day time.
- Powerful (or elites) people of the community fix the time for the evaluation exercises. Marginalized people are often excluded while making such decisions.

f. Rigidity:

- Rigid evaluation approach (i.e. tools, methods, process) cannot encourage the local people to participate in the process. Rather, it excludes the voices of the poor, women and children.
- Application of participatory tools cannot make the process participatory if the process itself is not flexible.

g. Lack of immersion:

- If adequate rapport with the local people is not developed, their inner (heartily) participatory is almost impossible.
- Mostly during the workshop, this lacks as outsiders have less time and need to cover very many things.

## **11. Role of the facilitators**

Evaluation team members have to play the following roles in order to make the evaluation process more participatory and bring the work into success.

a. Facilitation role:

- Share the objectives of evaluation.
- Discuss the importance of local people's participation in evaluation exercises and convince for their active participation.
- Make the process easy or set the climate to support the local people to participate in the evaluation process.
- Encourage the marginalized people to participate in the evaluation process.
- Minimise the conflicting environment during the exercises.

b. Documentation:

- To document the information.
- To make the notes of opinions expressed during the evaluation exercises.

c. Observation:

- Keen observation is necessary during the exercises in order to minimise the domination of powerful individuals or groups.
- Handle the conflicting situation and manage the disturbing situation.

A team of three facilitators has been found appropriate for effective facilitation for participatory exercises. However, it should not be taken as a formula. Three members can play the roles mentioned above more effectively. Team of female facilitators would be better to conduct evaluation exercises with women groups.

## **12.Necessary qualities of the facilitators**

Facilitators should have the following qualities to facilitate participatory evaluation exercises for fruitful results.

a. Attitude and behaviour:

- Respecting local culture and people.
- Listening to the local people's ideas.
- Flexible and friendly behaviour.
- Have no biasness and should be positive.

b. Concept/knowledge

- Knowledge on participatory evaluation: what is participation, what is evaluation, etc.
- Knowledge on social diversities.
- Understand the power structure in the society and marginalized situation.
- Clear ideas on and about the evaluation process and stages to be followed.
- Know how and why conflicts are raised.
- Teamwork.
- Knowledge about the projects and & program
- Knowledge about the organization (evaluation organizer)

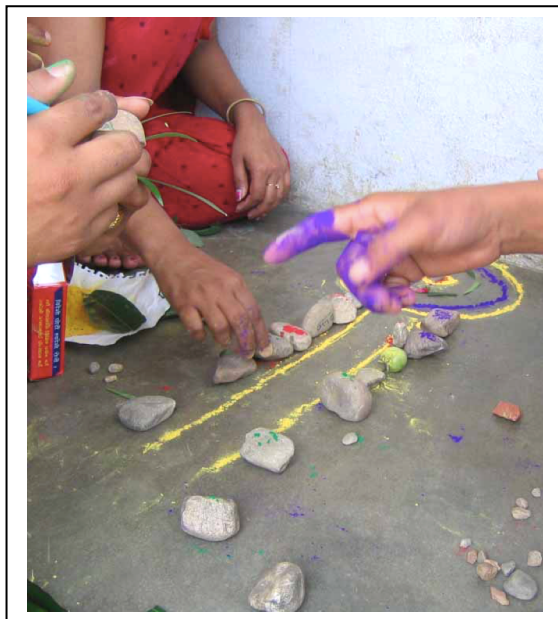
c. Skills

- Facilitation skills.
- Knowledge and experiences on using participatory tools.
- Conflict management skills.
- Group mobilisation skills. Etc.





### 13. Some visual clips of participatory exercises







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1. Evaluation Guidelines (1999), DANIDA
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